



PLACER COUNTY
SHERIFF
CORONER-MARSHAL



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EDWARD N. BONNER
SHERIFF-CORONER-MARSHAL

STEPHEN L. D'ARCY
UNDERSHERIFF

PRESS RELEASE

DATE/TIME OF RELEASE: 07-08-01 / 2330 HOURS
DATE/TIME OF OCCURRENCE: 07-08-01 / 2130 HOURS
NATURE OF CALL: INTERFERENCE WITH THE OPERATIONS
OF AN AIRCRAFT.
LOCATION OF CALL: LOZANOS AND WISE ROADS - OPHIR
CASE NUMBER: SO-11548 / SO-11550
RELEASED BY: SGT. JEFFREY AUSNOW

SHERIFF EDWARD N. BONNER RELEASES THE FOLLOWING:

Placer County Sheriff's Helicopter "Falcon 30" was assisting fire units in locating an illegal control burn in the Ophir area. The pilot and observer team located the fire and were guiding the fire department units to the location of the fire when they were temporarily blinded by a high powered spotlight. This operation was during nighttime hours. The light caused both the pilot and observer to completely lose all reference of the ground, and the aircraft's flight instruments. This can cause flight crews to experience "Vertigo" and lose control of the aircraft, inducing a likely fatal crash. Thankfully, they were able to maintain control of the aircraft until they regained their night vision. They remained on station and guided the Fire department to the location of the fire.

The person with the spotlight continued to shine it at "Falcon 30" for almost 20 minutes. Once the fire units were in place, the pilot and observer team were able to locate the source of the spotlight and guide PCSO ground units in to make an arrest. As the ground units responded, another person with a high powered spotlight began shining it at the aircraft. Again, the pilot and observer team were able to guide ground units in to make the arrest.

Two persons were arrested for 248 PC, interference with operation of an aircraft. The first suspect had an 800,000 Candlepower light, and the second had a 2,000,000 Candlepower light in their possession at the time of arrest. Both were booked at the Placer County Jail as listed below:

S/1: Wayne Francis Rowley age 62 of Wise Road in Ophir
Charges: 248 PC - interference with operation of an aircraft

S/2: Michael Scott Johnson age 43 of Lozanos Road in Ophir
Charges: 248 PC - interference with operation of an aircraft
11550 HS - Under the influence of a controlled substance

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